

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 SY-05

PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 PRS-01 USIA-06 /056 W

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R 182105Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2018

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 6530

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BL

SUBJECT: ALLEGATIONS ABOUT CIA AGENTS IN BOLIVIA

1. DEPARTMENT'S ATTENTION IS CALLED TO FBIS 1189 2292139 IN WHICH IT WAS REPORTED THAT AMERICAN MISSIONARIES IN BOLIVIA ALLEGED TO BE MEMBERS OF THE MARYKNOLL ORDER HAD CIRCULATED A REPORT ABOUT CIA AGENTS OPERATING IN BOLIVIA. THE STORY REPEATS MATERIAL REPORTED IN PRESENCIA NEWSPAPER OF AUGUST 4, 1976, WHICH WAS A REPEAT OF A FRENCH PRESS STORY FROM PARIS. THE REPORT BEING CIRCULATED IN BOLIVIA GOES ON TO REPORT BIOGRAPHIC DATA, PROBABLY TAKEN FROM THE DEPARTMENT'S BIOGRAPHIC REGISTER, AND INCLUDES TELEPHONE NUMBERS AND NAMES OF WIVES WHICH INFORMATION PROBABLY HAS BEEN TAKEN FROM AN EMBASSY TELEPHONE DIRECTORY. SOME EMBASSY PERSONNEL HAVE RECEIVED PHONE CALLS INQUIRING ABOUT WHEREABOUTS OF SOME OF THE PERSONS NAMED IN THESE STORIES.

2. AMBASSADOR HAS BEEN QUESTIONED BY MEMBERS OF PRESS IN CASUAL STREET ENCOUNTERS, ASKING FOR COMMENTS ON REPORTS OF CIA AGENTS OPERATING IN BOLIVIA. HE HAS RESPONDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING INSTRUCTIONS.

3. APPROPRIATE STEPS HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO REDUCE TO THE MINIMUM ANY ADVERSE IMPACT ON MISSION PERSONNEL AND TO SECURE ANY MATERIALS WHICH COULD BE FURTHER USED BY WHOMEVER IS DISTRIBUTING SUCH INFORMATION.

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4. WE INTEND TO DISCUSS MATTER AT EARLY OPPORTUNITY WITH MINISTER OF INTERIOR. FOR HIS PART, AFTER THE AUGUST 4 STORY APPEARED IN PRESENCIA, HE STATED PUBLICLY THAT HE KNOW OF NO INTELLIGENCE AGENTS OPERATING IN BOLIVIA.

5. MARYKNOLL FATHER WILLIAM BOTTLE DISCUSSED MATTER WITH AMBASSADOR ON AUGUST 17 IN VIEW OF REPORT THAT IDENTIFICATION OF CIA WAS BEING MADE BY MARYKNOLL ORDER IN BOLIVIA. FATHER BOTTLE SAID THAT THE MARYKNOLLERS ARE NOT INVOLVED, THAT HE HAS CHECKED WITH AS MANY MEMBERS OF HIS ORDER AS HE CAN AND FOUND TO HIS SATISFACTION THAT NO ONE HAS BEEN ENGAGED IN SUCH ACTIVITIES, AND THAT HE HAS BEEN AUTHORIZED BY FATHER LEO SOMMER, HEAD OF THE MARYKNOLL ORDER IN BOLIVIA, TO INFORM US OF THEIR CATEGORICAL DENIAL OF ANY PARTICIPATION IN CIRCULATING SUCH MATERIAL. FATHER BOTTLE SAID THAT HE HAS RECEIVED LONG-DISTANCE TELEPHONE CALLS FROM THE WASHINGTON POST CORRESPONDENT IN BUENOS AIRES, A REPRESENTATIVE OF CHURCH WORLD NEWS SERVICE FROM THE US, AND SEVERAL LOCAL MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES. HE SAID THAT HE HAS TOLD EACH OF THEM THAT THE MARYKNOLLERS KNOW NOTHING WHATSOEVER ABOUT THE REPORT ATTRIBUTED TO THEIR IDENTIFYING CIA AGENTS. BOTTLE SAID THAT WASHINGTON POST REPORTER IN BUENOS AIRES SAID SHE WAS FILING STORY INCLUDING MARYKNOLL DENIAL.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ALLEGATIONS, ESPIONAGE AGENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976LAPAZ06530
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760317-0858
From: LA PAZ
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760843/aaaablp.tel
Line Count: 86
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 FEB 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <11 FEB 2004 by GarlanWA>; APPROVED <14 SEP 2004 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ALLEGATIONS ABOUT CIA AGENTS IN BOLIVIA
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, BL, US, CIA, MARYKNOLL
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006